

Senator Derek Slap Testimony to The Education Committee

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, ranking members, vice-chairs, and members of the committee, thank you for having me today. I am here to testify in favor of HB 7082 – An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in The Public School Curriculum.

Racial tension is an extremely complicated problem that has spurred deep conflict in our country's history. The best way that we can study, honor, and learn from our past is by not forgetting it. We need to recognize our history and, more importantly, make sure that our children and young people are learning about the full scope of our country's most troubling moments.

Although African American history is taught in one form or another in many communities, we are unable to ensure that it is taught in a standardized and meaningful way. We need to make sure that all of our students are receiving a comprehensive history that teaches about the different aspects of African American struggles and accomplishments.

According to a recent study by the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance project, slavery is often "mistaught, mischaracterized, sanitized, and sentimentalized" at schools all over the country. This has led to widespread misunderstanding about more contemporary racial issues throughout our country. The study also found that a majority of high school seniors cannot identify the 13th Amendment as the official end to U.S. slavery, or even recognize what the Middle Passage was. This is our opportunity to do the right thing and change these horrific trends in our public schools.

Implementing more well-rounded curriculum about the African American experience, such as the reasons why slavery occurred, the heroic civil rights struggles of the 1960s, and contemporary racial tensions in our country, will give students more background on the subject and remind them that this is not a static history, but rather a fluid history that we ourselves are still creating. This legislation allows for the opportunity to foster a socially conscious and informed generation of young people.

This is one more small yet essential step to ensuring that justice and recognition is served to those who have struggled and continue to struggle because of racism in our country. Remember, we can only create a better future if we learn from our past mistakes. I ask the members of this committee to vote for progress on this issue.

Thank you,
Senator Derek Slap

